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ABSTRACT

A systems approach was used to assess, remediate, and/or develop compensatory strategies in learning disabled college students. The approach consisted of four components: an analysis of the educational task, preparation of criterion measures, preparation of behavioral objectives, and preparation of instructional sequences. A task analysis was established for one student, which was based on a history syllabus. Steps involved determining the necessary sequential tasks a nondisabled person would perform to complete the educational task, evaluating the student as to how well the task was learned, designing specific behavioral objectives for the student, and developing an individualized curriculum based on instructional sequences that met the specific needs of the learning disabled student. A copy of the student's posttest is appended. (SB)

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A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO ASSESSING AND REMEDIATING LEARNING DISABILITIES IN LEARNING DISABLED COLLEGE STUDENTS

The approach to instructing students with learning disabilities at Northern Kentucky University grew out of the need of the instructors in the Learning Assistance Center to adequately serve students with specific learning needs. These students, who for the most part possessed average or above intelligence, as measured by the I.Q. test, experienced tremendous difficulty in introductory level courses requiring them to read, write, or take written examinations. Forced into a situation of having to provide some meaningful instruction to such students, the faculty in the Learning Assistance Center developed remedial and compensatory techniques that, for the most part, proved to be quite successful. Thus, the purpose of this section is to present a profile of a learning model designed to correct learning disabilities in college students.

To develop a sensitivity to the colossal nature of the task, imagine for instance that a student of history was asked to describe: (1) The Incas, (2) Sir Francis Drake, and (3) John Cabot and he turned in the following. (See Appendix I for the post-test)

INCAS - was a Scunh anaina tild of rausad the 1500 who was caner by sheips arnada dancing the aztecs.

SIR FRANCIS DRAKE - was a spiese a potie in the late 1500's.

JOHN CABT - he was a Englis nan of Round the late 1400's and a Expoler who wooder have descver Anein.

Imagine also that another student wrote the following when asked by an English professor to describe her summer vacation.

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I went to Canada last year and I bought a pair of shoes. We visid the Captil Ottawa. We went throw New York City and visited the stachyou of liberty. We went to Quebec to visit Quebec city. We went throw Philadelpha also. We stated at Koa camps and has a lot of fun camping. I wnet swimming and the atlantic ocean Lake Erie also. My howl family went with us in my brothers van. We came throw Detoreat Mishecon.

Since both samples are from actual students, it was the task of the faculty in the Learning Assistance Center to provide the most effective instruction possible. Incidentally, the student responsible for sample #1, Raymond, is still enrolled as a part-time students after completing two successful semesters. The student responsible for the second sample, Julie, was withdrawn from the University after a few weeks because she was a victim of brain damage. It was determined that this student was unlikely to improve significantly because her problems were much greater than what is generally termed as "learning disabilities."

Even though the first sample represents an extreme case of a "Salvagable" learning disabled student (questionable depending on an institution's resources), it was learning disabilities similar to this one, but a a much lesser degree of severity, that presented our faculty with a complex network of pedagogical questions--questions whose answers would determine the academic survival and future learning independence of these students. Such questions included:

(1) Is it possible for the student to both pass the course and become an independent learner based on the nature of his/her learning deficiencies?

(2) Should the emphasis be on remedial work, i.e., concentrating on correcting the learning disabilities or should emphasis be placed on compensatory strategies, i.e. strategies that will enable the student to survive the course-work without correcting the learning disabilities? Or should emphasis be placed on both.

(3) What are the exact skills needed by the student in order to meet the requirements of the syllabus?

(4) What skills does the student currently possess that may be used as strengths in the learning process?

(5) What will be the sequence or nature of the instructional process?

(6) How do we develop an appropriate instructional process?

(7) How are we to determine whether or not the behavior has been learned?

(8) How can we establish realistic behavioral objectives for the student that may be achieved by the end of our influence?

(9) What will be our actual methods and what materials should we use to enable the student to either develop his/her independent learning behavior or successfully pass the course or both?

In short, our task was to design a program which if followed would increase the probability that learning will occur and if learning does not occur according to the plan, the possibility must exist through evaluative tools to tell where and when the instruction or remediation went wrong.

Our procedure for assessing, remediating and/or teaching students how to compensate, in many ways resemble what Stanley W. Johnson and Robert L. Morasky call "the systems approach" to instructing the learning disabled student. This approach, like the one we developed at N.K.U. consists of the following components: (1) An Analysis of the Educational Task, (2) Preparing Criterion Measures, (3) Preparing Behavioral Objectives, and (4) Preparing Instructional Sequences.[1] Hence by designing a learning format based on these components for

each student diagnosed as being learning disabled, we were able to successfully meet the individual needs of every student who entered our program

To understand these components more thoroughly, let us examine how each one worked to assess, remediate, and/or develop effective compensatory strategies for our learning disabled students.

Our first step was to develop an accurate analysis of the educational task. In other words, we had to figure out what would be the necessary sequential tasks a nondisabled person would perform in order to complete the educational task. Since the educational task of college students is to fulfill the requirements of their syllabi, our first task was to determine the specific learning skills it would require to meet the requirements of the syllabus.

In that the history syllabus was used with Raymond, let us examine how we established a task analysis based on the history syllabus. According to the syllabus, the student must be able to (1) read the textbook, (2) take lecture notes, and (3) construct well organized, coherent essays. The reading required having word attack, word recognition, and comprehension skills. Taking lecture notes required being able to listen and record the concepts within the lecture. Finally, writing the essays required being able to write coherently using correct spelling, correct grammar and punctuation, and correct sentence, paragraph, and essay construction.

A second aspect of our task analysis required composing a set of assumptions. The assumptions in our model are based on three variables: (1) skills and behaviors anyone must have in order to begin learning the task, (2) willingness of the professor to use

alternative methods to evaluate the learning disabled student's mastery of the subject matter, and (3) the ability of the learning disabled students to develop the necessary skills to become an independent learner or to simply pass the course or both. For example, the assumptions for Raymond were stated as such:

- ASSUMPTIONS -

(1) Anyone possessing college level word attack and reading comprehension skills will be able to read the history textbook and take lecture notes.

(2) Anyone possessing the ability to write correctly in terms of sentence structure, paragraph structure, and essay structure will be able to write essays.

(3) A learning disabled student who does not possess college level word attack skills must possess the ability to listen to a tape recording of the lecture and textbook material and understand the material well enough to verbally explain it.

(4) A learning disabled student who does not possess the ability to write correct sentences, paragraphs, and essays must be able to orally organize ideas using complete sentences, coherent ideas, and logical patterns of speech.

(5) If a learning disabled student who is unable to attack words on the appropriate level and who does not possess the ability to write correct sentences, paragraphs, and essays hopes to pass the history course, the history professor must agree to appropriate compensatory measures such as the usage of a tape recorder to read the textbook and record essay answers; providing that the student works with a tutor to transcribe the tape into essay form.

(6) If a learning disabled student who does not possess reading and writing skills, yet who possesses the ability to comprehend by listening, wishes to become an independent learner, such a student must systematically develop word attack skills, spelling and writing skills while engaged in compensatory efforts.

In order to directly evaluate the learning disabled student's ability to perform the educational tasks, the next step of the procedure was to construct criterion measures. The function of these measures were: (1) to determine the exact nature of the instructional process and (2) to determine whether or not the learning occurred. With Raymond, we determined he lacked word attack skills completely but had tremendous ability in recognizing words. This was determined by allowing him to read orally a paragraph from the history

book. Therefore, we decided that Raymond would be allowed to listen to a tape recording of the textbook for comprehension, while simultaneously working with a team of tutors to develop his word attack and spelling skills. He would learn writing structure from his English class, which worked along with both his history class and his reading class to help remediate his learning deficiencies. Hence, Raymond's instructional process consisted of (1) learning history by listening to a tape recorder, (2) learning how to recite his knowledge of history using an essay format, (3) developing word attack skills by working with tutors on specific word and letter sounds and practicing recognizing such sounds by reading the textbook simultaneously with the tape recorder, and (4) learning to write by transcribing his lecture notes and essays.

Step 2 of our criterion measures was designed to determine whether or not learning occurred. With Raymond this was accomplished by providing him with specific instruction then evaluating how well he learned the task. For example, the history professor would require that Raymond read the textbooks while listening to the taped recording of each chapter. She would then ask Raymond specific questions to see how well he understood the text. In this case, the degree to which Raymond understood the subject of history was determined by the criteria of her questions. His word attack skills were measured by having him constantly write and recite newly acquired word parts and by transcribing his lecture notes and essays. Finally, his writing progress was measured by how well he could recite coherent sentences, paragraphs, and short essays on the tape recorder and transcribing them using proper grammar, punctuation, capitalization, etc.

The next step was to design specific behavioral objectives. Our purpose for constructing behavioral objectives was to convey a picture of the behaviors expected from the student after the instruction was complete. With Raymond our objectives were as follows:

(1) Given a history textbook the student will be able to follow a taped reading of each paragraph and comprehend the contents.

(2) After being provided instruction in word attack skills, including phonics, consonant sounds and syllabication, the student will be able to read the history text independently with pronunciation accuracy of at least 30%.

(3) Given a history lecture the student will be able to record the lecture on a tape recorder, transcribe the lecture and solicit the aid of a tutor to help with spelling and comprehension.

(4) Given an essay question on a history examination, the student will be able to verbally construct a coherent, well-structured essay conveying his knowledge of the subject.

(5) Given the taped recording of the student's oral essay, the student will be able to transcribe the taped essay and solicit the aid of a tutor to perfect spelling, grammar, and writing structure and organization.

After the objectives were established it was then necessary to develop an individualized curriculum based on instructional sequences that met the specific needs of each learning disabled student. It was the job of each tutor to design, build, revise and rebuild a sequence of instruction that moved the student from an unlearned state to a learned state.

In Raymond's case in addition to the history, English and reading class, he was provided with nine hours per week of tutorial instruction.

3 hours per week on basic phonics and spelling
2 hours per week on writing
4 hours per week reading and content assistance

Equipped with a task analysis which provided a set of behaviors the student must learn, criterion measures which measure the student's progress and final objectives which convey a picture of the behavior expected from the student after instruction was complete, each tutor was given the task of developing a learning program based on principles which, if followed, would increase the probability that learn-

ing will occur and most importantly if learning does not occur, the use of evaluative tools would tell where and when the instruction or remediation went wrong. Such principles were as follows:

(1) In any instructional sequence the student must be called upon to make relevant, regularly scheduled, active responses related to the task to be learned.

(2) In any instructional sequence, a model of the response the student is to identify should be available.

(3) In any instructional sequence, the student must be positively reinforced for learning the material in order to maintain high student motivation.

In conclusion, while our approach to the learning disabled student is not a panacea, by (1) analyzing the task to be learned, (2) designing a system to measure the student's progress, (3) describing specifically the student's behavior after the learning is completed, and (4) designing instructional sequences based on principles which would insure effective learning, the comprehensive approach to assessing and remediating learning disabilities has for the most part proven to be an effective approach to identifying and remediating learning disabilities in learning disabled college students.

APPENDIX #1

POST TEST
(Turned in on September 3, 1981)

Raymond Rice

I agree that John Brown's death did more to cause the civil war than did the actual raid because...

Brown's plan was to overthrow slavery in a large part of the country. Brown felt only a slave uprising would make slave holders aware of their guilt, and that God had selected him as their leader. By late 1850, many abolitionists were convinced that slavery had no peaceful solution even if this plot failed, Brown believed that the hysteria that would then sweep the South would provoke a major sectional crisis, dividing a proslavery South and an antislavery North after his unsuccessful raid. Brown wrote a letter to Senator Mason telling the South to prepare themselves for settlement and at the same time trying to tell northerners what lead him to Harpers Ferry. Northern abolitionists praised Brown for his actions and they wanted the South to complete the works of immortalizing their hero. On October 27, Brown's trial began. Brown's lawyer, Lawson Botts, produced a telegram saying Brown was insane, to save his life, but Brown wanted to use his trail as a national forum for preaching the antislavery gospel not to save his life. The conclusion of the trial was on October 31. Brown spoke out in court addressing the country defending his actions at Harpers Ferry by distorting facts and appealing directly; and in an emotional manner, but for the North's support Brown and his raiders were sentenced to hang. While in jail, Brown greeted a procession of visitors during his last

month. He was allowed to receive and send letters to anyone he wished. These letters fixed his image among northerners as a christian martyr.

Brown made his execution a national event. Thousands now saw him only as a brave christian going to his death with calm nobility. By the time Brown died he had become a symbol, he had won the sympathies of the convinced antislavery forces, and the compassion of many who were opposed to abolitionism. In the South Brown's image was that of a grim avenging devil who tried to start a massive slave revolt.